BEST WAY TO FIGHT CANCER? Turns out plant-based nutrients are real science behind strengthening immune cells and boosting anti-tumor activity

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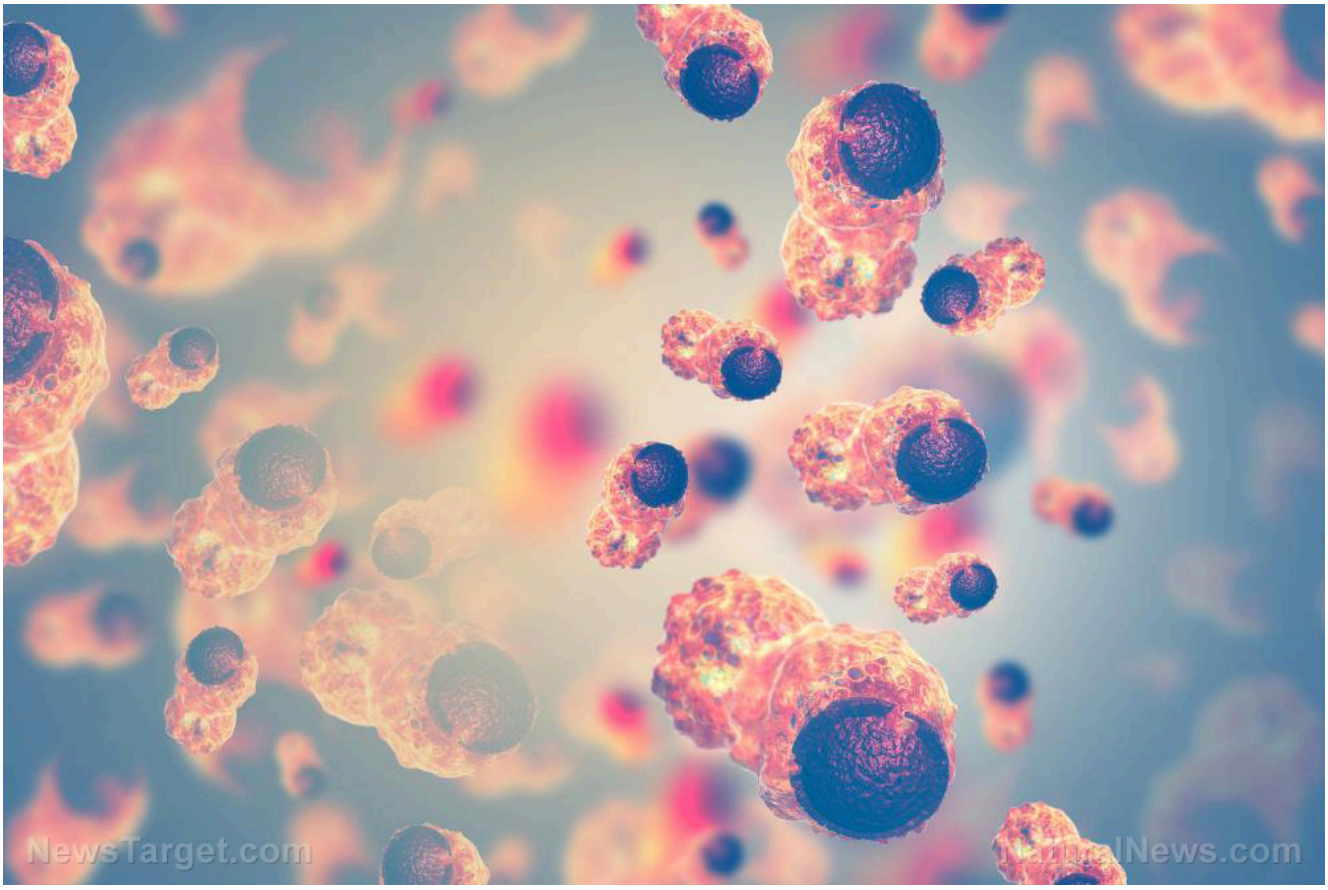

When most Americans find out they have cancer, the first thing they do is prepare themselves for surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and pharmaceuticals their oncologist highly recommends. They may go get a second exam or opinion from another oncologist, and then it's off to the drip factory for the most toxic and least effective cancer therapy on the planet. What other choice do they have? Well, natural remedies that are plant-derived, that's what.

A common dietary nutrient known for protecting vision may have a surprising new role in cancer treatment. Researchers from the University of Chicago have discovered that zeaxanthin—a plant-derived carotenoid found in foods like spinach, kale, and orange peppers—can enhance the immune system's ability to destroy tumor cells. The findings, published in *Cell Reports Medicine*, suggest that this inexpensive, widely available compound could strengthen modern cancer immunotherapies.

- **New immune-boosting role for a vision nutrient** – Researchers found that zeaxanthin, a carotenoid best known for eye health, strengthens CD8+ T cells, enhancing their tumor-killing capacity.

- **Improved cancer immunotherapy** – In mouse models and lab tests, zeaxanthin supplementation slowed tumor growth and significantly enhanced the effects of immune checkpoint inhibitors and engineered T-cell therapies.

- **Safe, accessible, and already available** – Naturally found in vegetables like orange peppers, spinach, and kale, as well as over-the-counter supplements, zeaxanthin is inexpensive, well-tolerated, and has a known safety profile, making it a strong candidate for rapid clinical testing.

- **Opens a new field of nutritional immunology** – The findings suggest that specific dietary compounds can directly boost immune function at the molecular level, potentially making cancer treatments more effective and accessible worldwide.

Plant-based Nutrient Can Boost Immune Cells' Ability to Fight Cancer

Zeaxanthin is best known for supporting eye health, but the new study reveals a completely different function. By screening a library of blood nutrients, the research team identified zeaxanthin as a compound that boosts the activity of CD8+ T cells, key immune cells that recognize and kill cancer cells. These cells rely on a molecular structure called the T-cell receptor (TCR) to identify abnormal cells. The researchers found that zeaxanthin stabilizes the TCR complex, leading to stronger intracellular signaling, increased cytokine production, and enhanced tumor-killing power.

In mouse models, dietary supplementation with zeaxanthin slowed tumor growth. Even more promising, when combined with immune checkpoint inhibitors—powerful immunotherapy drugs that have revolutionized cancer care—zeaxanthin significantly improved treatment outcomes compared to immunotherapy alone. To further test its potential, the team examined human T cells engineered to target specific tumor antigens. In laboratory experiments, zeaxanthin-treated cells showed improved ability to kill melanoma, multiple myeloma, and glioblastoma cells.

“Our data show that zeaxanthin improves both natural and engineered T-cell responses, which suggests high translational potential for patients undergoing immunotherapies,” said senior author Jing Chen, Ph.D., Janet Davison Rowley Distinguished Service Professor of Medicine at the University of Chicago.

The advantages of zeaxanthin go beyond its biological effects. Unlike experimental drugs, zeaxanthin is already available over the counter, is well-tolerated, and has a known safety profile. This makes it an attractive candidate for rapid testing as an adjunct to cancer treatment. Because it’s naturally found in common vegetables, increasing dietary intake is also feasible, reinforcing the importance of nutrition in supporting immune health.

The study builds on Chen's previous work on nutritional immunology, which examines how specific nutrients influence immune function at the molecular level. Earlier research from the same group showed that a fatty acid derived from dairy and meat, trans-vaccenic acid (TVA), could also boost T-cell activity through a different mechanism. Together, these discoveries suggest that nutrients from both plant and animal sources may provide complementary benefits to immune-based therapies.

While the findings are promising, the researchers caution that they are still at an early stage. Most results come from laboratory and animal studies, so clinical trials will be essential to determine whether zeaxanthin supplements can improve outcomes in cancer patients receiving immunotherapy. If confirmed, this simple dietary compound could make advanced cancer treatments more effective, more accessible, and possibly less toxic.

As Chen notes, "Our findings open a new field of nutritional immunology. With more research, we may discover natural compounds that make today's cancer therapies more effective and accessible."

Tune your internet dial to NaturalMedicine.news for more tips on how to use natural remedies AND plant based nutrients for preventative medicine and for healing, instead of succumbing to Big Pharma products that cause, spread, and exacerbate disease and disorder.

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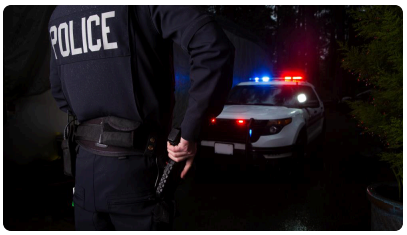

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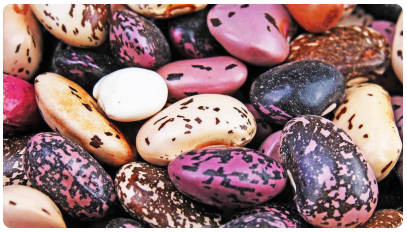

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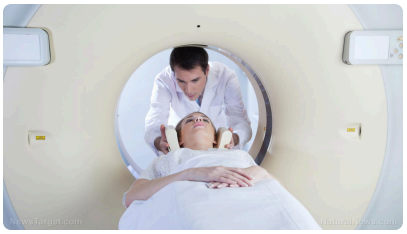

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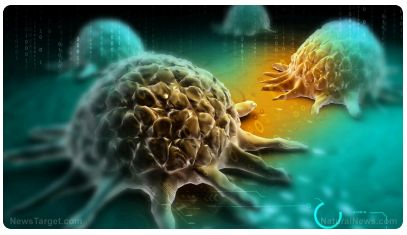

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